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AUTHOR Sanchez, Sue; Cosby, Arthur G.
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ABSTRACT

Effects of early marriage and marriage deferment on educational attainment and occupational achievement of black and white youth were investigated in a longitudinal study of 1,052 rural youth from Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, and Texas. Data were obtained from the larger Southern Youth Study, 1966-72. Within the framework of the life cycle perspective, early marriage was found to be associated with a set of attitudinal antecedents generally indicative of lower level achievements. Specific findings showed: both blacks and whites who held aspirations and expectations during adolescence for lower level education and occupation married early; actual early marriage was associated in early adulthood with lower attainment as well as with continuation of lower achievement orientations; negative achievement influence of early marriage was generally pervasive for both males and females, blacks and whites. An unexpected finding was that the interrelationship between marital deferment and achievement attitudes did not appear until early adulthood for blacks, and then for expectations and attainments only. For whites, early marriage had a depressant effect on adolescent and early adult aspirations and expectations, both educationally and occupationally. Findings taken collectively point to timing of marriage as an important behavior influence in status attainment processes. (Author/RS)

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MARRIAGE DEFERMENT AND ACHIEVEMENT OF RURAL YOUTH: COMPARISONS OF BLACKS AND WHITES*

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Sue Sanchez and Arthur G. Cosby
Department of Rural Sociology
Texas A&M University

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ABSTRACT

The effects of early marriage and marriage deferment for the educational and occupational achievement process is investigated in a longitudinal study of 1052 southern rural youth (Southern Youth Study). Within the framework of a life cycle perspective, early marriage was found to be associated with a set of attitudinal antecedents generally indicative of lower level achievements. Both Black and White subjects who held aspirations and expectations during adolescence for lower level education and occupation were found to marry early. Actual early marriage was in turn found to be associated in early adulthood with lower attainment as well as with the continuation of lower achievement orientations. The negative achievement influence of early marriage was found to be generally pervasive throughout the sample holding for both males and females, blacks and whites. These findings taken collectively point to timing of marriage as an important behavior influence in status attainment processes.

In recent years, understanding of the American stratification system has advanced considerably from information resulting from the study of status attainment processes (Blau and Duncan, 1967; Sewell et al. 1969, 1970; Haller and Portes, 1972; Porter, 1974; Alexander and Eckland, 1974; Portes and Wilson, 1976 among others). This body of literature has provided a new understanding of influences of social origins on later attainments as well as the effects of various factors which intervene at different points between origins and attainments. One consequence of this approach has been to bring the life cycle perspective into stratification research as a useful conceptual tool. This study attempts to address this body of research by introducing the life cycle notion of marriage timing as a potentially important influence in attainment processes.

It has been found that as young people mature they form attitudes toward their eventual life plans. These life plans appear to focus around at least two central ideas: (1) education with career plans; and (2) marriage and family plans (Bayer, 1969a). With these two concepts forming a major part of a person's life, it has proven useful to determine to what extent and in what manner the two interact with and/or conflict with each other while individuals establish their statuses within society. The life cycle perspective provides one general framework for examining the effects of these two life plan areas by ordering events in a meaningful sequence for analysis.

The primary purpose of this research is to investigate the effect deferment of marriage has on the ability of youth to achieve higher levels of education

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and, therefore, by inference, higher levels of occupational status. Educational attainment has been investigated as one of the primary variables affecting status attainment (Sewell et al. 1969, 1970 Alexander and Eckland 1974). This research investigates the possibility that marriage deferment is an important variable in status attainment research of similar significance to educational attainment. In status attainment research, level of education is seen as an intervening variable that transmits adolescent influences such as significant other influences, grade point and aspirations to subsequent attainments. From the life cycle approach marital deferment can be viewed as a variable that can potentially enhance achievement.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The Life Cycle

The life cycle perspective assists the study of status attainment in two important ways. First, it can provide a better understanding of how social origins influence a person's opportunities to achieve status as well as providing an understanding of the importance of educational attainment in the determination of one's status (Sewell and Hauser, 1972). Secondly, because it also provides a causal sequence of events that are involved in the transmission and eventual attainment of status, it can be useful in providing a better understanding of the interaction of the education and career plans with the family plans of a young person.

According to Bates and Harvey (1975), the average American's life cycle contains six stages--infancy, childhood, adolescence, adulthood, middle age and old age. As an individual moves from one stage to another, alterations in the person's activities occur and changes in the quality and amount of their participation within the society takes place.

There are critical points in the life cycle where drastic changes in the person's relationships, activities, and behavior occur. These changes are a result of the sudden engagement of new and more complex roles by individuals, while they at the same time leave behind simpler and more comfortable roles. During the adolescence to adult transition Bates and Harvey (1975) point to leaving school, entering work, marriage and parenthood as a major crisis period during the life cycles. From the life cycle perspective marriage and parenthood are of similar importance as education and occupation.

Life Cycle and Attainment

Attainment, both educationally and occupationally, is essentially a process that begins early in the life cycle and continues through adulthood and middle age (Falk and Cosby, 1974). Because of this, a person's attainment can be viewed as a result of the accumulation of prior factors, influences, events, experiences and positions that people are exposed to.

In the childhood stage of the growth cycle individuals begin to form aspirations concerning their future. These first aspirations often take the form of fantasies concerning what the child desires as far as education, marriage, occupation, and number of children wanted. Slowly, as they mature, their choices begin to take the form of more realistic expectations (Ginzberg, et al., 1951).

It is possible for a person's aspirations, expectations, and subsequent attainments to vary. This occurs because the process of achieving certain levels of attainments is never ending in that when one set of expectations is achieved, new aspirations and expectations will be formed while old ones may be revised (Cosby, et al., 1976). From this we recognize that childhood and adolescent experiences and attitudes have an important effect on subsequent adult attainments but these effects undergo constant modifications and adjustments.

Blau and Duncan (1967) were among the first to utilize the life cycle concept to study social mobility and status attainment. Through their work they try to provide a systematic analysis of what they feel is the major foundation of the American stratification system. By determining four family background variables of a male population--father's education, father's occupational attainment, highest level of education completed by the individual, prestige level of individual's first job--they seek to discover two primary relationships. First, they are interested in determining the extent that inherited or ascribed statuses affect the social fate of an individual and second, they investigate the extent that previous positions in the status hierarchies affect later attainment levels (Blau and Duncan, 1967; Haller and Portes, 1973). From their studies, Blau and Duncan found that the parents' position did have a direct effect on the attainment of their offspring, but that the primary effect of parents was an indirect one via the educational level the offspring was enabled to complete.

Sewell and his associates (1969, 1972, 1975, 1968, 1970) conducted a series of studies concerning status attainment which have come to be known as the Wisconsin model. These researchers have extended the earlier work of Blau and Duncan by introducing various social psychological factors which could be related to educational and occupational aspirations that form between social origins and subsequent attainments. Utilized in their study were variables concerning the status of both parents, significant other influences, mental ability, and level of respondent's aspirations for education and occupation.

THE DATA

Sample

The data analyzed in this study were obtained from a larger parent project entitled the Southern Youth Study (SYS) that was collected in three waves. The SYS consists of high school age, rural youth from the six southern states of Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina and Texas.

Wave I of the SYS was collected in 1966 from a population of sophomore high school students. The final sample consists of students who are socio-economically similar and that are from rural counties.[1] Students who were present for classes on a specified day were given a group-administered questionnaire. No attempt was made to contact those students who were not present. Wave II was conducted

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[1]For more detailes see Education and Work in Rural America The Social Context of Early Career Decision and Achievement, Chapter III John K. Thomas.

in 1968 when a similar questionnaire was given to all seniors at high schools used in the first wave. After these questionnaires were completed, they were matched with questionnaires from Wave I. Only questionnaires from those students who participated in both waves were used.

In 1972, four years after panel participants were expected to graduate from high school, a second follow-up was conducted. At this point a stratified sample from Waves I and II was taken. This sample was stratified by both race (50:50) and sex (60 male:40 female) within each state. [2] Personal interviews, mail questionnaires and telephone interviews were used at this point. The final sample consisted of 1,052 black and white rural youth--201 black females, 247 black males, 240 white females, 364 white males.

Variables

Several variables were used to analyze the effect of marriage deferment on achievement attitudes and attainments of young people. These variables were chosen because they closely coincide with variables that have been used in previous status attainment research.

Aspirations and expectations for occupations were measured in 1968 and 1972 according to Duncan's (1961) SEI. These were separated into two main groups. Those with SEI scores of forty-five or less were considered to have lower socio-economic aspirations and expectations. Those with SEI scores greater than forty-five were considered to have middle to high socio-economic aspirations and expectations.

Educational aspirations and expectations were measured in 1968 and 1972. These variables were divided into two groups also: those with less than college aspirations or expectations and those with college aspirations or expectations. Educational and occupational attainments as of 1972 were coded in the same manner as the previous educational and occupational variables.

The final variable utilized was marital status in 1972. For purposes of this study, marriage deferment has been operationally defined in a three category classification. The first category includes respondents who were married during high school or within two years of high school graduation. The second category is made up of respondents who were not married in the period beginning two years after high school through four years after graduation. The third category consists of respondents who were not married at the time of the 1972 recontact. This division will distinguish between youth who married early in the life cycle, those who marry after a certain amount of post-high school experience, and those who marry after the normative age of 22.

Analysis

Contingency table analysis was utilized to determine the relationship between

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[2] Mississippi was omitted because comparable data was not available for each wave for that state.

the antecedents to and consequences of marriage deferment. Chi square values were computed for each table and evaluated using the .05 level of statistical significance. A coefficient of contigency (C) was computed for each table as a measure of association. Sex and race controls were carried throughout the analysis.

RESULTS

Analysis of the data is conducted in three parts. The first examines adolescent attitudes concerning education and occupations as antecedents to marriage deferment. In the second portion consequences of marriage deferment on newly-formed, early adult education and occupation attitudes are investigated. Finally, analysis of the consequences of marriage deferment on early adult educational and occupational attainments was conducted.

Table 1 provides a breakdown of the marriage deferment behavior of panel participants. Approximately one-half of the participants were married at the time of the 1972 recontact but substantial differences existed between race and sex categories. Fewer blacks than whites married early. Only 16 percent of the black men and 24 percent of the black women married within the first two years after high school while 20 percent of the white men and 46 percent of the white women were married at this point. The explanation for this variation is unclear. Perhaps, since blacks have many hardships to contend with during the course of their lives, they curtail marriage because it could be an additional factor which would further complicate their lives. A second explanation could be that many of the blacks who married early dropped out of high school and were, because of sampling techniques used, excluded from the sample. As might be expected, women in each race married earlier than men, especially those who married within the first two years after high school.

Antecedents to Marriage Deferment

Adolescent attitudes concerning educational and occupational preferences are analyzed as antecedents to marriage deferment. Table 2 summarizes these comparisons.

Educational Preferences, 1968

Two measures of adolescent educational preferences are examined--aspirations and expectations. In both cases, analysis showed that educational preferences had a significant relationship on marriage deferment for whites, both males and females. In general, it was found that whites who had aspirations for and who expected to attain at least college educations have a tendency to defer marriage. For example, of the white males who aspired to college educations 60 percent were unmarried in 1972. On the other hand, 37 percent of the males who aspired to less than college educations were unmarried in 1972. In the case of educational expectations, 64 percent of the males who expected to attain college educations were unmarried in 1972, while only 39 percent of the males who expected to attain less than a college education remained unmarried. White women exhibited a similar pattern. Thirty-eight percent of the females who expected college educations were unmarried in 1972, while only 22 percent of those who expected to attain less education were unmarried.

Overall a larger proportion of whites than blacks exhibited expectations for college educations. Approximately 40 percent of the black males and females

TABLE 1: Frequency of Marital Deferment of Southern Youth Study: Race and Sex Comparisons

	BLACK		WHITE		
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Total
	% (N)	% (N)	% (N)	% (N)	% (N)
Married Within Two Years After High School	16 (40)	24 (49)	20 (73)	46 (111)	26 (273)
Married Within Four Years After High School	19 (46)	19 (38)	29 (104)	26 (63)	24 (251)
Not Married As of 1972	65 (161)	57 (114)	51 (187)	28 (66)	50 (528)
TOTAL	100 (247)	100 (201)	100 (364)	100 (240)	100 (1052)

TABLE 2: Contingency Coefficients Between Adolescent Attitudes and Marital Deferment

	BLACK		WHITE		Comments
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Educational Aspirations in 1968 by Marital Deferment	X^2 = .32 C = .04 df = 2	X^2 = .76 C = .06 df = 2	X^2 =23.18* C = .27 df = 2	X^2 =17.20* C = .26 df = 2	Higher level educational aspirations were associated with marriage deferment for white males and females.
Occupational Aspirations in 1968 by Marital Deferment	X^2 = 1.81 C = .09 df = 2	X^2 = .88 C = .07 df = 2	X^2 =13.88* C = .20 df = 2	X^2 = 5.21 C = .15 df = 4	High level occupational aspirations were found to be associated with deferment of marriage for white males only.
Educational Expectation in 1968 by Marital Deferment	X^2 = 1.30 C = .07 df = 2	X^2 = 2.71 C = .12 df = 2	X^2 =33.31* C = .29 df = 2	X^2 =21.14* C = .15 df = 2	Expectations for College educations associated with marriage deferment for white males and females.
Occupational Expectations in 1968 by Marital Deferment	X^2 = .53 C = .05 df = 2	X^2 = .45 C = .05 df = 4	X^2 =23.13* C = .26 df = 2	X^2 =17.05* C = .26 df = 4	Expectations for higher level occupations was associated with deferment of marriage for both white males and females.

*Significant at the .05 level

expected to attain college educations, while 51 percent of the white males and 36 percent of the white females expected to attain higher levels of education. All race and sex categories had a lower percentage of people who expected to attain college educations as compared to aspirations.

Occupational Preferences, 1968

Adolescent aspirations and expectations were examined in conjunction with occupational preferences. White males were the only group to show a significant relationship between adolescent occupational aspirations and marriage deferment. In contrast, both white males and females exhibited significant relationships between early occupational expectations and marriage deferment.

Analysis showed that white males who had adolescent aspirations for high level occupations tended to defer marriage. For example, 56 percent of the white males who aspired to higher level occupations were unmarried in 1972, while only 41 percent of the males who had aspirations for occupations with lower scores were unmarried. Along the same lines, whites who expected to attain occupations with SEI scores greater than forty-five had a tendency to defer marriage. This trend is readily observable in that 60 percent of the white males who expected higher-scored occupations were unmarried in 1972, while 43 percent of those who expected to attain lower-scored occupations were unmarried in 1972. Twenty-three percent of those who expected lower scored occupations remained unmarried.

Forty-one percent of the black males and 57 percent of the white males expected to attain occupations with SEI scores over forty-five. Analysis for females was more complicated because of the inclusion of "housewife" as an occupational choice. Seventy percent of the black females expected higher scored occupations and only 3 percent expected to be housewives. Fifty-three percent of the white females, on the other hand, expected to achieve higher-scored occupations and 29 percent expected to be housewives.

Four variables were utilized to determine the relationships between adolescent educational and occupational attitudes and marital deferment. Seven of the eight possible relationships were found to be significant for whites while none of the educational or occupational attitudes proved to be significant for blacks. This indicates that adolescent achievement motives and marital deferment are bound together for whites while this does not appear to be the case for blacks. The behavior pattern of whites coincides with the theoretical and empirical writings of Bayer (1969a, 1969b). He noticed that behavior patterns of young adults were influenced by adolescent attitudes, especially educational aspirations. The reasons for blacks not behaving in the same manner as whites is unclear. It is possible that the configuration of achievement attitudes of white youth both include and reconcile marriage plans with the more obvious education and occupation orientations, whereas for black youth, the configuration is more segmented with compartmentalized achievement attitudes on the one hand and familial orientation on the other.

Early Adult Attitudes as Consequences

The third phase of the analysis was concerned with examining the consequences of marriage deferment on newly-formed early adult attitudes concerning education and occupations. Both aspirations and expectations were considered. Table 3 summarizes these race and sex comparisons.

TABLE 3: Contingency Coefficients Between Early Adult Attitudes and Marital Deferment

	BLACK		WHITE		Comments
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Marital Deferment by Educational Aspirations in 1972	$X^2 = .12$ $C = .02$ $df = 2$	$X^2 = .86$ $C = .06$ $df = 2$	$X^2 = 8.34$ $C = .15$ $df = 2$	$X^2 = 12.63^*$ $C = .22$ $df = 2$	Marital deferment was found to be associated with aspirations for a college education for white males and females.
Marital Deferment by Occupational Aspirations in 1972	$X^2 = 4.69$ $C = .14$ $df = 2$	$X^2 = 8.26$ $C = .20$ $df = 4$	$X^2 = 16.65^*$ $C = .21$ $df = 2$	$X^2 = 17.43^*$ $C = .26$ $df = 4$	The relationship between marital deferment and high level occupational aspirations was found to be significant for white males and females.
Marital Deferment by Educational Expectations 1972	$X^2 = 3.64$ $C = .12$ $df = 2$	$X^2 = 7.88$ $C = .20$ $df = 2$	$X^2 = 35.75^*$ $C = .30$ $df = 2$	$X^2 = 24.03$ $C = .30$ $df = 2$	Marital deferment was found to be associated with expectations for higher levels of education for white males and females and for black females.
Marital Deferment by Occupational Expectations in 1972	$X^2 = 8.67^*$ $C = .19$ $df = 2$	$X^2 = 3.51$ $C = .26$ $df = 4$	$X^2 = 17.61^*$ $C = .22$ $df = 2$	$X^2 = 32.72$ $C = .35$ $df = 4$	Relationships between marital deferment and high level occupational expectations were found to be significant for all race and sex categories.

*Significant at .05 level

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Educational Preferences, 1972

Early adult aspirations and expectations were used to examine educational preferences in 1972. Whites, both males and females, were the only group to show a significant relationship between marital deferment and early adult educational aspirations. For early adult expectations, significant relationships were found for white males and females and for black females.

In general, it was found that the longer white participants deferred marriage, the more they tended to aspire to college educations. For example, college aspirations for white males increased from 57 percent for those who married within the first two years after high school, to 75 percent for those who were unmarried in 1972. For white females, college aspirations increased from 49 percent for those who married earlier to 72 percent for those who were unmarried.

Over sixty percent of each race and sex category had aspirations for college educations. This is particularly interesting because it represents a slight increase in the college aspirations of each group from 1968 to 1972.

Analysis of educational expectations showed that the longer white males, white females and black females deferred marriage the more they tended to expect college educations. For example, 21 percent of the black women who were married within the first two years after high school expected to attain college educations. The percentage increased to 45 percent for those who were unmarried in 1972. For white males the proportion of respondents who expected college educations increased from 21 percent for those who married early, to 63 percent for those who were unmarried in 1972. The proportion increased from 22 to 56 percent for white females.

Educational expectations were rather low, especially in comparison with early adult aspirations. Fifty percent of the white males expected college educations. All other groups had approximately 40 percent of the people expecting college educations. This suggests that, even though the majority of the respondents in this sample desire college educations, many of them do not perceive the opportunity to fulfill their desires.

Occupational Preferences, 1972

As was done previously, early adult aspirations and expectations are used to analyze occupational preferences in 1972. White males and females were the only groups to exhibit a significant relationship between marriage deferment and early adult occupational aspirations while all sex and race categories exhibited significant relationships concerning expectations.

Overall, the longer whites deferred marriage, the more they tended to aspire to occupations with SEI scores over forty-five. The percentage of white men who aspired to occupations with scores over forty-five increased from 49 for those who married within two years after high school graduation to 75 percent for those who were unmarried in 1972. For white females, aspirations for higher scored occupations increased from 70 percent for those who married earliest to 94 percent for those who deferred marriage until after 1972.

Occupational aspirations for all race and sex categories were rather high. Between 54 and 80 percent of each category expected to attain occupations with SEI scores over forty-five. For both races, a higher proportion of females aspired to higher-scored occupations than males. Once again, few black or white females aspired to the occupation of "housewife".

Analysis of educational expectations indicate that the longer respondents deferred marriage the higher were their occupational expectations. For example, expectations for occupations with scores over forty-five increased from 26 percent for black males who married earliest to 42 percent for those who were unmarried in 1972. Black females had a 24 percent increase, white males had a 29 percent increase and white females experienced a 39 percent increase in expectations from those who married earlier to those who deferred marriage until after 1972.

The data showed a significant decline in the percentage of respondents who aspired to higher-scored occupations versus the percentage who expected to attain such occupations. Between 18 and 39 percent of each race and sex category expected to attain higher-scored occupations. More whites exhibited expectations for higher-scored occupations and a smaller percentage of black males than black females expected to attain occupations with scores over forty-five.

In this portion of the analysis four variables were utilized to investigate consequences of marital deferment on early adult educational and occupational attitudes. For whites in the sample, marital deferment proved to have a significant relationship on all of the eight relationships. For blacks, no aspirational attitude was significant, but three of the four expectation attitudes were significant. It was also found that relationships concerning expectations were stronger than they were for aspirations. These findings indicate two important patterns. First, for white respondents, early adult achievement attitudes appear to be closely tied to the marital deferment decision. This does not seem to be the case for blacks. Attitudes of blacks concerning educational and occupational aspirations appear to be independent of marital deferment but expectation attitudes appear to be influenced by marital deferment. Secondly, since expectations had a stronger relationship with marital deferment for all groups, it appears that, as the panel participants began to mature, marital deferment had more of an influence on expectations.

Early Adult Attainments as Consequences

Educational and occupational attainments were used to determine consequences of marital deferment. Table 4 summarizes the race and sex comparisons made.

Educational Attainments, 1972

Relationships between marital deferment and early adult educational attainments were found to be significant for all race and sex categories. Across all categories, the longer a person deferred marriage, the higher the percentage of people attaining college educations. For example, only five percent of the black males who married within two years after high school attained college educations as of 1972, while 20 percent of those who were unmarried in 1972 attained college educations. College attainment for black females increased from 6 percent for those who married earliest to 27 percent for those who were unmarried. The proportion of white males increased from 12 to 43 percent while white females had an increase from 12 to 47 percent.

TABLE 4: Contingency Coefficients Between Early Adult Status Attainment and Marital Deferment

	BLACK		WHITE		Comments
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Marital Deferment by Educational Attainment in 1972	$X^2 = 6.54^*$ C = .16 df = 2	$X^2 = 9.85^*$ C = .22 df = 2	$X^2 = 23.29^*$ C = .25 df = 2	$X^2 = 28.17^*$ C = .32 df = 2	All relationships between marital deferment and educational attainment were significant.
Marital Deferment by Occupational Attainment in 1972	$X^2 = 14.04^*$ C = .23 df = 6	$X^2 = 42.09^*$ C = .42 df = 8	$X^2 = 40.92^*$ C = .32 df = 6	$X^2 = 73.58^*$ C = .49 df = 8	All relationships between marital deferment and early adult occupational attainments were significant.

*Significant at .05 level

More whites attained college educations than blacks, but overall, the educational attainments of respondents were rather low. The proportion of people who attained college educations ranged from a low of 16 percent for black males to a high of 33 percent for white males.

Occupational Attainment, 1972

Relationships for marital deferment and occupational attainments were significant for all race and sex categories. Respondents who were students in 1972 had a strong tendency to be unmarried. For example, only five percent of the black males who married within two years after high school were students while 17 percent of those who married were unmarried when students. For white females, four percent of those who married earliest were students, while 38 percent of those were unmarried were students. The same pattern was exhibited by black females and white males.

Overall, occupational attainments were low. Only five percent of the black males and six percent of the black females attained occupations with SEI scores over forty-five. The percentage of whites who attained higher-scored occupations was slightly higher; 15 percent of the males and 31 percent of the females. These low attainments can be explained partly by the fact that respondents were approximately 21 to 23 years old at this time, which would mean they had not had sufficient time to acquire high status occupations. It was also noted that more whites were students. Twenty-seven percent of the white males and 17 percent of the white females were students, while 12 percent of the black males and 16 percent of the black females were students.

Analysis concerning consequences of marital deferment on early adult educational and occupational attainments provided many findings. For the first time, all relationships were significant. This indicates that, in most cases, marriage deferment and attainments are linked. Because of the relatively young age of the panel, it is difficult to draw conclusions concerning high achievement patterns; but it was found that low educational and occupational achievement was associated with early marriage.

The main achievement input for occupational attainment was "student". There was a strong tendency for respondents who were students in 1972 to be unmarried. This is important because many studies have linked education with occupational attainment (Blau and Duncan, 1967; Sewell and Shah, 1968). Also, because data concerning occupational attainment does not allow enough time for upward mobility patterns to emerge, it is hard to establish an occupational attainment pattern other than for the category of "student", but data on educational attainment shows clearly that marriage deferment enhances educational attainment.

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this research was to examine the effect of marriage deferment, within the educational and occupational achievement process, on young black and white youth. This was done by investigating, through the use of contingency tables, relationships that exist during various phases of a person's life. The analysis was organized in three parts. First, adolescent attitudes concerning education and occupations were investigated as antecedents to marital deferment. Second, the relationship between marital deferment and newly-formed educational

and occupational attitudes were studied. Lastly, associations between marriage deferment and educational and occupational attainments were analyzed.

An important and somewhat unexpected finding of this study was that the relationship between achievement attitudes and marriage deferment were different for whites than they were for blacks. During the life cycle phases of adolescence and early adulthood, white respondents, for the most part, exhibited significant relationships between achievement attitudes, actual attainments and marriage deferment. In early adulthood, aspirations of blacks still did not appear to be associated with marital deferment but expectations and attainments did. From these findings we can conclude that the matrix of attitudes formed during adolescence and early adulthood concerning educations and occupations are interrelated with marital deferment for whites. For blacks, the interrelationship does not appear until early adulthood.

For whites, early marriage had a depressant effect on adolescent and early adult aspirations and expectations, both educationally and occupationally. At the same time, adolescent and early adult attitudes for higher levels of education and higher status occupations were associated with later marriage. It was also found that higher levels of early adult attainments for whites, as well as continued education, were associated with later marriage. The behavior pattern of white panel participants is supportive of previous status attainment research. For example, Call and Otto (1977) found, in a study of males, that where there were early marriages there were low aspirations, and, conversely, when men were successful academically they were more likely to defer marriage. A study conducted by Treiman and Terrell (1975) pointed out that women who deferred marriage had higher expectations and were betted educated.

As has been stated, the relationship between marital deferment and achievement attitudes did not appear until early adulthood for blacks and then for expectations and attainments only. Although the behavior of blacks is inconsistent with that reported in most studies, there is a plausible explanation found in the literature. The "success-theme" that exists in American society has been discussed by researchers (Merton, 1968; Williams, 1951). Most people agree that American society emphasizes achievement, especially occupational achievement. Because of this, American youth accept and desire a common, societal value of success. Cosby (1974) points out that we can assume, heuristically, that young people fall into one of two groupings concerning occupational attainment possibilities: (1) those who have a high probability of achieving high status occupations, and (2) those who have a low probability of achieving high status occupations. When the concept of the "success-theme" is combined with the concept of two groupings of occupational attainment probabilities it appears that those youth who ascribe to societies evaluation of occupations will have achievement attitudes that are unrealistic.

Cosby (1974) carries this line of thinking a step further. He hypothesizes that choices made by those people who have a low probability of achieving high status occupations may have little direct relationship on their behavior. Instead he sees these attitudes as "a psychological crutch, a compensating influence for socially defined behavior in a success-oriented society" (Cosby, 1974). In other words, those people who will probably have low achievements adjust to their status within society by projecting their success into the future. Such thus remain social psychologically within the "success ethos" even if their behavior and attainment are generally inconsistent. To do otherwise would admit failure and be of high psychological cost.

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